

Amelung Glass Manufactory Considered Large Industry For Colonial Maryland

By RALPH F. MARTZ

Bennett's Creek has long been named after the Bennetts who settled in Prince George's County as early as 1712. The Bennett's Creek Area covers a long and colorful history, of which this article is only a small portion.

The headwaters of Little Bennett's Creek originate in the Damascus area of upper Montgomery and empty into Big Bennett's Creek near Thurston. Big Bennett's Creek originates in the eastern portion of Frederick County, flowing through Urbana District and emptying into the Monocacy just above Lilypons. Bear Branch originates from springs on the west side of Sugar Loaf and flows into Bennett's.

A person traveling west on the old Georgetown-Frederick Town Road (now Route 355) will observe a State Roads



Commission historical sign near the "Old Stone Barn" with the inscription: "First Glass Manufactory in Maryland. Established by John Frederick Amelung, of Bremen, Germany in 1789."

George Washington and Thomas Jefferson were trying to establish new industries in America. Amelung was given encouragement from the Americans.

Amelung left Germany in May 1784 and landed in Baltimore on the 31st of August. He received encouragement from Washington, Jefferson, Paca and Charles Carroll of Carrollton. They were interested in establishing a glass factory in America.

Had 68 Workers

Amelung had 68 workers in his party besides their families. He purchased 2100 acres of wooded land on the west side of Sugar Loaf. This acreage laid along both sides of Bennett's Creek starting at Thurston and extending to the Monocacy. His holdings included "Gantt's Garden" of 1570 acres, "Adam's Bones" of 194 acres; "Tobacco Hook" of 71 acres; "I Don't Care What" of 51 acres and two other parcels.

He built his home on the crest of the hill so that he could view his factory and his community from his new mansion. His home was a large commodious two - story brick house with kitchen and spring house. It was a beautiful rectangular building with very thick walls typical of the times. There is a large chimney at each end of the house. At the west end there appears a date of 1789. The front entrance opened on a wide porch from which broad stairs led to a terraced lawn. There was a magnificent ball room on the second floor with fine paneling around the fireplaces.

The former ball room space has been modified to make smaller rooms. There are four corner fireplaces in the mansion. Two of them have excellent paneling. The lawn is terraced down to Bennett's Creek. There is a magnificent view over the fields and woods toward Sugar Loaf.

Ovens Along Creek

He built glass ovens along

AMELUNG HOUSE — Shown above is the old home built by

Bennett's Creek, blacksmith shops, warehouses, stables, a saw mill together with 15 dwellings for his craftsmen on the west side of Bennett's. This community had a church and a school, and was called New Bremen. It was a short distance from the present village of Park Mills on Bennett's Creek, which is about three miles from Buckeystown.

Johann Friedrich Amelung was a glass blower. George Fearhake, who also was a good glass blower, came with the original group.

Amelung built glass ovens for bottles, window glass, wine glasses, tumblers, and table glass. His craftsmen engraved emblems, cyphers, and coats of arms on much of his glassware. His glass is noted for quality of its material and skilled engravings. Amelung glass is recognized for its perfection. He made non - lead glass in clear shades and some in brilliant colors of amethyst, sapphire blue, emerald green, and light purple.

On one covered goblet is engraved what appears to be "G. J. Schley." It is presumed that this glass was made for George Jacob Schley, son of John Thomas Schley, the founder of Frederick.

Many pieces are engraved with masonic emblems. At one time he had 342 persons in his employment.

Charles Carroll of Carrollton said that Amelung produced the best glass in America. President Washington was greatly interested and became a personal friend.

Masonic Lodge Established

Amelung called the beautiful valley, where his operation was established, "Fleecy Dale". He established the Fleecy Dale Lodge, one of the earliest Masonic lodges in this country. Most of his craftsmen belonged to this order. George Fearhake and Abraham Faw were members of this lodge.

John Frederick Amelung which overlooks Bennett's Creek near Park Mills. The

His factory was established in 1785 and remained in operation until 1795. Abraham Faw was his agent in Frederick, while Thomas and Samuel Hollingsworth were his agents in Baltimore. His group included, besides glass blowers, blacksmiths, bakers, shoemakers, stone masons, laborers, and two doctors. He had several large fires which destroyed much of the property and inventories. He was unable to secure financial assistance.

In 1794 Amelung gave a mortgage to Abraham Faw, his agent in Frederick. Amelung could not regain his financial losses. In 1795 the glass works were put up for sale. There were no buyers at the time. Amelung was unable to pay his craftsmen. Some went to Baltimore, others went to Pittsburgh and the west. Amelung died at at his daughter's home in Baltimore. Litigation dragged on for several years, and the mansion and other buildings were sold in 1804 at a bankruptcy sale.

Many museums and private collectors now hold pieces of Amelung's fine glassware, such as goblets, wine glasses, decanters and candleholders.

House Also Declined

The mansion, located near the Park Mills Road, was allowed to go into decline. The D. J. Lake survey of Frederick County, published by C.O. Titus & Co., dated 1873, shows that H.D. Ordeman lived there. In 1940 the mansion was bought by Mr. and Mrs. Alden Fisher of Frederick. They restored much of the property. In 1947 it was sold to Prof. and Mrs. William R. Quynn.

The property was recently purchased by Mr. and Mrs. Henry W. Becraft of Gaithersburg. They are collectors of Amelung Glass, and also have many other fine antiques. They plan to make their home in the Amelung mansion.

Leaving the old mansion and traveling across the Park Mills bridge and up to the hillside is

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the old Simmons graveyard, where Major James Lee Simmons, an officer in the War of 1812, is buried. Above the mouth of Bennett's Creek is the land owned by the Orme family, where Captain Archibald Orme of Revolutionary War fame lived. Nearby was the home of John Darnall, who served as aide-de-camp to Colonel George Washington during the French and Indian War. He later became clerk of the Frederick County Court.

Five miles above the mouth of Bennett's Creek is where Major Roger Johnson built his Bloomsbury Forge in 1787. He was known as the "ironmaster" of the Sugar Loaf. He manufactured his charcoal in burning pits. The early travelers would tell how they traveled past Sugar Loaf at night and saw these "charcoal burners". They could be seen for miles around.

O.A. Miller operated a flour mill in 1873 at Park Mills, which lies in Urbana District.

Further up Bennett's Creek was the location of Peter's Tavern, which was established in 1791.

Recently excavations have been made at the glass factory site. It is thought that besides the mansion house, there were 30 dwellings, two glass houses, two flatting houses, three ovens, warehouses, stables and a saw mill. This was a large industrial site for early Maryland.